

Self-esteem absent in teens

By Anna West
Reporter

"I like myself. I'm good. I'm capable. I have something positive to offer myself and other people."

How often do people in the 90's think and believe these statements about themselves? Most psychologists say not enough. Everyone suffers from low self-esteem at some point in their lives. However, many people constantly belittle themselves inwardly and truly believe that they are worthless.

The National Council for Self-Esteem (NCSE) in Sacramento, California defines self-esteem as "the experience of feeling that you're worthy of happiness and capable of managing life's challenges." It is a balanced combination of self-confidence and self-respect.

Most psychologists agree that people are born with enough self-confidence to get through all of life's ups and downs. But as they get older, people are bombarded with numerous comparisons and small messages that they are not good enough, and they become self-conscious. These instances chip away at their self-confidence until soon they begin to give themselves negative feedback at times in their lives when they most need a healthy self-esteem.

Research points to the fact that more

women have low self-esteem than men. During their education, women do as well or better than men academically. However, their self-esteem decreases. Between kindergarten and high school, girls' self-esteem drops much more significantly than boys'. In kindergarten, the vast majority of students are happy being themselves, but by high school, only 29% of girls continue to feel good about themselves as opposed to 46% of boys.

Self-criticism, particularly about their bodies, influences self-esteem. In one test where men and women are asked to pick the silhouette of their body out of a variety of weights, men pick a silhouette two or three sizes thinner and women choose one two or three sizes larger, regardless of their actual size.

People have an idol that they would like to be and expect themselves to be. They either view themselves as being farther from their idealistic self than they actually are or have unrealistically perfect idols to try to live up to. When individual events occur in their lives that are disappointing or that don't live up to their expectations, people tend to blow the experiences out of proportion. Each bad experience eats away at their self-esteem.

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Psychologists suggest that people make a list of their good qualities, events that turned out well, and goals they have reached. When something goes wrong in their lives, they can consult that list. Then they see the bad event as a specific experience, not a characteristic that defines their whole lives.

Another important response to negative experiences and feelings is to face the exposed flaw and think about small things that can be done to improve, not give up on yourself.

There are many small ways to improve self-esteem and keep up self-confidence. One is to spend lots of time around friends who care about you and let you know it. Experts say that friends are very important to self-esteem because they reinforce positive beliefs and make up the "psychic family," which provides support as well as objectivity.

Mamadou Niang, a senior, says, "My friends influence my self-esteem because they play a big part of who I am."

Other ways to improve self-esteem include beginning the day with a fun routine, staying physically healthy, learning new skills and hobbies, setting small goals that are easy to meet, visualizing success, acting confident,

and substituting the word "could" for "should" when criticizing actions.

Experts disagree as to whether the road to healthy self-esteem is self-gratification, meaning people focus on their good qualities and positive attributes they already have, or self-improvement, or achieving goals and thereby sending a positive sense of accomplishment without focusing entirely on oneself.

Some psychologists believe that self-gratification ultimately leads to selfishness, which causes a loss of friends and support, bringing down a person's self-esteem. People learn to place themselves above others and not to respect others. These experts support self-improvement, as do many Grimsley students.

Zach Johnson, a sophomore, says, "(I support) self-improvement because whenever I accomplish something, it makes me stronger as a person and helps me set and achieve new goals."

Other students believe that self-gratification is the best way to improve self-esteem. Abi Harris, a freshman, says, "Telling yourself you're okay is better because you don't have to worry about what other people think about you."

Officer Robinette says, "I believe that confidence in your own ability and self-discipline are the keys to achievement."

Lara Dean, a sophomore, says, "I think it has to be a combination of both."

Amnesty utilizes the power of words

By Peter Baggish
Reporter

They sit and write letters, nothing more. They write to foreign governments and to state governments insisting on basic human rights. On Wednesdays about 20 students file into the Grimsley Media Center and begin to work for a someone's amnesty, someone they do not know, and will probably never meet. Why do they do it? Because he is human, just like the rest of us and does not deserve the kind of horrid, inhuman treatment that goes unnoticed and unrecognized and has been going on for a hundred years. It might seem worthless and futile, but governments around the world consider supporters of human rights to be dangerous enemies. Letters from the United States are particularly influential.

Since 1988 the Grimsley chapter of Amnesty International has been wielding their truly powerful pens in hundreds of selfless campaigns. Worldwide, chapters work to prevent some of the gravest violations of human rights. The movement is independent of any government, political grouping, ideology,

economic interest or religious creed. Started in 1961, Amnesty International seeks the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience - those imprisoned solely for their beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion - who have not used or advocated the use of violence. They oppose the death penalty, torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of all prisoners.

Danielle Rossi, a junior, is Vice-President of Amnesty International and is frustrated with the lack of interest from the student body. She says, "People don't even realize what amnesty means. We cannot be apathetic to the atrocities that terrorists and even governments commit every single day." Being an active human rights supporter doesn't require that much effort. Postcards are handed out and only a signature is needed -- a thought to the well-being of another human. "You don't have to agree with everything Amnesty International stands for, only that you care, and it works," says Rossi, "It really works." Hundreds of wrongly accused and incarcerated prisoners have been released due to the efforts of Amnesty International students.

Around the world people are imprisoned and tortured for their religion, political beliefs, language, color, sex, and ethnic background.

Amnesty International uses the power of words to work against injustice.



Join the
Grimsley Amnesty Chapter
by contacting
Erin Murphy, Danielle Rossi, or Mrs. Vanstory.

Write a letter; save a life.



This family is one of 300,000 in Kenya who are forced to move to refugee camps due to the ethnic violence caused by the Moi government.

Amnesty photo